



SNAP

Survivors Network of those
Abused by Priests

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Judge Thomas M. Durkin
United States District Court

The Honorable Thomas M. Durkin
United States District Court Northern District of Illinois
219 S Dearborn St. Courtroom 1446
Chicago, IL 60604

RE: Sentencing of Dennis Hastert

Dear Judge Durkin:

Thank you for insisting that letters supporting Denny Hastert be made public. We believe sunshine is the only antidote to secrecy, especially when powerful adults commit or conceal heinous child sex crimes and well-meaning adults choose to seek leniency for child molesters or enablers.

This letter is sent to ask that your sentence of Dennis Hastert be severe and include a long jail sentence. We request that you also demand that he establish a victim assistance fund to assist all his victims, those who have already, as well as those who may in the future, speak up and come forward.

Please sentence him for all the crimes he committed, or at least, all those that have been brought to your attention. Archaic and arbitrary statutes of limitation, that have since been reformed, prohibit the prosecution of Denny Hastert for the sexual violence he imposed on vulnerable and trusting children over several years. He gets away with those crimes because he successfully damaged the victims in such a way that they were not able to speak up sooner. But just because it took them longer to speak up than Illinois law permits does not mean that they do not continue to suffer. It is also likely there are other victims who have not yet told.

The crimes that have come to light create the opportunity for justice now. We not only believe that justice demands a long jail sentence, we also believe it demands the use of this sentencing to deter other wrongdoing. Maybe another wrestling coach or scout leader who is tempted to sexually violate a child will decide against it if he or she sees Denny Hastert sentenced severely for committing such crimes.

Denny Hastert dramatically increased suffering to his victims by his false allegations that one of his victims was extorting money from him. This deliberate and calculated

deception might have ended differently. The one-time victim who Hastert sexually violated and robbed of his innocence had already suffered for decades but might have also ended up in prison.

Hastert tried to portray himself as the victim and someone who needed law enforcement's help falsely claiming that someone was extorting money from him. As a powerful politician he may have succeeded and John Doe A could have been forced to endure horrific additional suffering being indicted and punished for a crime he didn't commit. Hastert was willing to allow that to happen, even potentially sending an innocent man to jail, in an effort to keep his dirty secrets hidden.

Denny Hastert has not shown a willingness to take responsibility and admit the sex crimes he committed. He added insult to his victims by minimizing his crimes and calling them merely "mistakes in judgment." Repeated sexual violations of children are not "mistakes." They are deliberate and horrific crimes that have potential life-long devastating impacts on victims. His crimes were predatory and pre-meditated and the decades he spent attempting to silence his victims only isolated and re-victimized them.

Learning bits of the facts from public news reports at least one of Hastert's victims was abused "all through high school" and died young of AIDS and another reportedly struggled with drugs, alcohol and financial difficulties. Real people and their loved ones have suffered and continue to suffer because of Hastert's crimes, not his "mistakes in judgment." It is likely the victim who died young might never have contracted AIDS had it not been for Hastert violating him at such a young age.

We know Hastert's victims have suffered for decades because SNAP supports such victims who struggle all their lives to feel like well-adjusted functioning members of society. We also know because most of our perpetrators, like Hastert, are revered in the community.

We need to make it easier for victims, whatever their age, to speak up. This is the best way for victims to find healing and to protect other children who may be at risk today. For the sake of public safety we ask you to use this opportunity to take a stand against sexual violence and for children who become victims.

Please send a strong message, first to Dennis Hastert. Make it clear that his denials and minimizing of his crimes do not show he is taking responsibility. Give him a long sentence knowing whatever sentence you give will not be as long as the time his victims and loved ones have suffered for what he did. Demand that he establish a victim assistance fund to provide for the financial needs of his victims, regardless of when they are able to speak up.

Send the message to other sexual perpetrators that they need to be aware that if they are caught they will be given harsh penalties. Please do not be swayed by those who point out all the "good" Hastert has supposedly done as a public servant. None of the

good can outweigh the immense harm done to the victims and their loved ones. None of it makes the lives of his victims any less tortured.

And please don't assume that he has learned his lesson and will not harm another child. We do not know how many victims he has or when he last violated a youngster. It can happen so fast and its impact is usually extremely harmful. Social scientists assert that most perpetrators continue to abuse until they are stopped. Only in prison can we be certain he cannot harm another child.

Lastly, send a clear message to other victims. Let them know you understand the harm they have suffered. Make it clear that you and the people of the United States take sex crimes against children seriously. Send Dennis Hastert to prison for a long time and demand that he be held accountable for the damage he caused to so many.

Thank you for your consideration,

Barbara Blaine

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